

The Wheel

By

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EXT. BIKE SHOP - NIGHT

A young man in full bike gear exits the shop. He calls over his shoulder to a co-worker who stands in the doorway.

PAUL  
See you tomorrow.

NEWTON  
You betcha - safe ride home.

EXT. CITY STREET - SAME

Rain pelts down on PAUL as he fights for right of way in rush hour traffic. An impatient car passes too close and sends a wave of gutter water into Paul's face.

EXT. PAUL'S CONDO - UNDERGROUND GARAGE ENTRANCE - SAME

Muddy and soaked, Paul activates the security gate and enters on his bike.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - BIKE ENCLOSURE - SAME

Lit by a bare florescent, a slight youth dressed in dark, grubby jeans and oversize jacket nervously messes with a bike. The jacket hood, tied tightly, conceals most of his scruffy face. The door to the enclosure is locked, a flap of chain link cut and bent open.

The rumble of the SECURITY GATE startles the thief. He grabs the front wheel he has removed, shimmies through the flap, and scurries to a concealed corner of the garage.

Paul rounds the corner into the underground. He narrowly misses running over the thief. A brief and awkward dance as they block each other's passage, apologies being mumbled. Paul notices the wheel in the thief's hand. Paul's eyes land on the hole cut in the enclosure door.

PAUL  
Hey!

The thief skirts around Paul and up the exit ramp.

PAUL  
Stop!

EXT. PAUL'S CONDO - UNDERGROUND GARAGE ENTRANCE - SAME

Thief has a head start, but Paul gives chase on his bicycle. At the garage entrance, Paul looks right. Nothing. Paul looks left and sees thief high-tailing it around the building towards the alley.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL ALLEYS - SAME

Thief leads Paul through a back-alley maze. Paul almost gains on him but is delayed by an obstacle (car? wheelchair? kitten?). The delay gives the thief the opportunity to ditch the wheel. Without breaking stride, he hurls it through the air. The wheel sails over a dense hedge and the thief ducks down a side street and into anonymity. Seconds later, Paul enters the same alley. He stops midway. Sees nothing. Sighs and slumps.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - FRONT HALL - LATER

Paul enters, dripping and wheezing, his bike helmet askew.

KALI (O.S.)

Where the hell have you been?!

PAUL

(peels off wet clothes, goes to bathroom, grabs towel, dries hair)

You're not gonna believe what just happened...I was riding home - this asshole car soaked me - then I get to the bike locker and this guy is stealing your wheel...and I chased him and I almost had him...I almost had him but then...

Paul rounds the corner of the hallway and is confronted by KALI - his girlfriend. Made up and fed up, she stands with arms crossed. Behind her is an elegantly laid table for two: candles, wine, fancy eats with linen napkins. Soft music plays.

KALI

Fuck!

PAUL

(meaning the wheel)  
I'm sorry - I'll fix it.

(CONTINUED)

KALI  
(meaning the dinner)  
It's ruined.

Paul, oblivious to Kali's romantic efforts, misunderstands her frustration.

PAUL  
No, no...it'll be fine. I'll get you a new wheel tomorrow.

KALI  
Don't bother. I'm leaving.

PAUL  
Don't go. I'll just have a quick shower and then we'll have dinner.

KALI  
No, Paul. It's too late.

PAUL  
(looks at watch)  
Too late? It's only 7:30.

KALI  
For **US** Paul. It's too late for **US**.

Kali grabs her bag and heads for the front door.

PAUL  
Is this because of the wheel?

She pauses and looks at Paul with contempt. Kali vehemently slams the door as she exits.

INT. BIKESHOP - DAY

Paul and NEWTON, his jovial co-worker, tune mountain bikes side by side.

NEWTON  
So...Kali all moved out yet?

PAUL  
Pretty much. All but her bike. She says it's worthless - like me.

(CONTINUED)

NEWTON

Ouch! Hell hath no fury like a woman whose front wheel hath been stolen. What are you gonna do with it?

PAUL

I don't know. I think I should keep it in case she changes her mind.

NEWTON

Paulie - she's not gonna change her mind. What you need to do is check yourself into "she-tox".

PAUL

"She-tox"?

NEWTON

Girlfriend detox. I read about it in Esquire. Until you cleanse your environment of all things Kali, you won't be able to recover from your addiction to her.

Newton spins the wheel of his bike. Paul watches the revolutions thoughtfully.

EXT. BIKE SHOP - DAY

Paul and Newton sit on the steps of the shop eating lunch. It is a beautiful fall day and Newton, chatty and bouyant, consumes his hearty looking sandwich with gusto.

Paul, caved in on himself, quietly eats his sad peanut butter sandwich. His appearance has deteriorated. His hair is unwashed - in need of a cut. His clothes look to have been picked out of the dirty laundry hamper. His sunken face is unshaven.

Two young women walk by on the sidewalk. Newton addresses them and makes small talk. They smile and slow their pace. Newton introduces himself and Paul, but Paul's palpable ennui repels them. They quicken their pace and depart.

NEWTON

Dude. You gotta get rid of the long face - you're crampin' my style. Those pretty girls wanted to say hello and you scared them

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NEWTON (cont'd)  
away with your pity-puss.  
[pause] She's been gone two  
months, Paulie. You gotta get back  
in the race.

PAUL  
Nah...I really don't feel...I'm not  
ready.

NEWTON  
C'mon. It's like riding a [Newton  
jerks his thumb back toward the  
shop]. Speaking of bikes - you  
don't still have Kali's, do you?

Paul looks down at his feet. Fidgets with his half-eaten sandwich and says nothing.

NEWTON  
Paul - what did I tell you? You  
need to get rid of her stuff. Let  
go of the damn bike!

Paul gathers the remainder of his lunch and trudges back up the stairs and into the shop. Newton shakes his head.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - FRONT HALL - LATER

Paul enters an almost barren apartment. All niceties that were Kali's have been removed.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - KITCHEN - SAME

The kitchen is a shambles. Unwashed dishes are stacked on every inch of counter space. Paul picks through the piles and finds the cleanest pot. He fills it halfway with water and sets it on a burner turned to high.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

One cup of prepared tomato sauce is slopped into a large, glass measuring cup.

A handful of pasta is thrown into the boiling water.

The measuring cup is put in the microwave.

Pasta hastily drained and dumped into the measuring cup of heated sauce.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Paul stands eating pasta out of measuring cup. He listens to his answering machine messages, chewing and gazing at Kali's bicycle, which hangs on the wall like a piece of art.

KALI (V.O.)

Hi - you've reached Kali and Paul. Leave us a message...[beep!]

PAUL'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Paul? It's your mother. You haven't let me know whether you and Kali are coming for Thanksgiving dinner. I need to know if you two are coming so I'll have an idea of how much food to prepare. Call me back...[beep!]

NEWTON (V.O.)

Paul, you pathetic piece of shit. Take. Her. Off. Your. Machine. Check your email - I sent ya something. Open it. Read it. Follow it. But first change your fucking phone message...[beep!]

Paul stares at the bike and chews despondently. He turns and looks at the answering machine. He turns his attention back to the bike and sighs. He shuffles out of the room. As he exits, he erases all messages on the answering machine and flicks off the living room light.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - COMPUTER ROOM - SAME

Paul sits in front of his computer. The only light in the room is cast from the monitor. He double clicks to open Newton's email message. The sole item in the body of the message is a folder titled "Get Over Her".

Paul mutters under his breath. Chews his bottom lip. Double clicks on the folder.

A long list of links opens in a new window. Paul slowly mouses down the list:

get\_over\_her.org

shetox101.com

tell\_your\_mom\_she's\_gone.com

[etc.]

He hovers over the last link: craigslist.com. He pauses a moment, then clicks.

INT. PAUL'S CONDO - COMPUTER ROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

Paul enters computer room. He yawns, bleary eyed and sets his cup of coffee on the desk beside the keyboard. He boots up his computer. A flurry of "New Message" notices litters his desktop. Paul starts to sign in.

The phone rings. As he brings the handset towards him, he knocks the handle of the cup. The cup upturns. A coffee waterfall cascades onto his keyboard.

PAUL  
(to himself)  
Shit! Shit! Shit!

Paul brings the handset up to his ear.

PAUL  
Hello?

NEWTON  
Well, it's not perfect, but I'm  
glad to hear your working on a new  
phone greeting.

Paul picks up the keyboard with one hand and shakes it upside down.

PAUL  
Damn, I just drowned my keyboard  
with coffee. Fucker!

Paul hits keys randomly. There is no response from the cursor on the screen.

NEWTON  
Fuck her? I hardly know her! Did  
you get a chance to open the folder  
I sent before you effed up your  
computer?

PAUL  
Yes, I read your stupid  
folder. And I posted that stupid  
bike on craigslist last night and  
woke up to a bunch of stupid  
messages that I can't access now  
because you phoned and made me  
spill my stupid coffee. This is all  
your fault.

(CONTINUED)



NEWTON

Oh, Grandma, what misdirected anger you have!

PAUL

All the better to shove my fist down your throat with.

NEWTON

Don't worry about the responses - we'll check 'em at work. Bring the bike with you - you'll be rid of it by the end of the day. You can sell lucky winner a new front wheel while you're at it.

(pause)

Ya did good, Paulie. I'm proud of you.

PAUL

You owe me a new keyboard.

Paul hangs up on Newton and walks out of the computer room.

INT. BIKESHOP - LATER

Paul and Newton read through Paul's craigslist responses on the shop computer. Paul has 38 responses in his in-box. Newton is gleefully engaged. He takes command of the mouse. Paul is an annoyed bystander. The weather outside matches Paul's mood: unpredictable with something a-brew.

PAUL

Stop! Stop reading messages! Just let me contact the first person who responded!

NEWTON

If you're giving the bike away, make it matter. Give it to the *right* person this time.

Paul, agitated, shoots Newton a dirty look and stomps over to the bike which is perched on a stand in front of a wall of wheels.

PAUL

You were the one pushing me to just get rid of the thing and now that I've decided to you want me to consider the options?

(CONTINUED)

Newton is consumed and oblivious. He opens up a new message. He smiles as he reads.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Newt, I don't want to interview and check references for every person that wants it. I just want it to go.

Paul impatiently flicks the coloured spoke ornaments that adorn the wheel.

NEWTON

OK, alright.

Newton quickly types a response.

PAUL

I want it to go NOW.

Newton hits "send".

NEWTON

(looks over at Paul)  
Consider it gone.

INT. BIKESHOP - LATER

A heavy rain beats against the windows of the shop. A young woman, DESTINY, walks in the door. She carries a large, lumpy plastic bag. Paul is in the back room, sulking while he takes inventory. Newton, behind the counter, looks up. Grins.

NEWTON

Miss Destiny, I presume?

DESTINY

You presume correctly.

NEWTON

Did you bring the item you mentioned in your email?

DESTINY

(lifts the bag up)  
Affirmative.  
(gestures towards bike)  
This the bike?

Destiny sticks a hand in the bag and pulls out a wheel.  
Think it'll fit?

(CONTINUED)

Newton looks at the wheel in her hand, then at the wheel on the bike. His eyes widen. His jaw drops.

NEWTON

I'm not sure - I'll have to get the expert out here. Just a sec.

INT. BIKESHOP - BACK ROOM - SAME

Newton rushes into the back room.

NEWTON

I know I said I'd deal with this for you, but you should really take care of this yourself.

Newton grabs Paul and steers him toward the front of the shop. Paul resists like an obstinate child, but is no match for Newton who is heavier and stronger.

INT. BIKESHOP - SAME

Destiny stands examining the bike. Her back is to the boys. The commotion of their scuffle as they appear in the doorway separating back room from the shop proper attracts her attention.

She turns toward them. Like Newton, Paul's reaction is one of utter disbelief. In Destiny's hand is the stolen wheel. Paul can't help smiling. She holds the wheel up.

DESTINY

Will it fit?

Paul hesitates for a heartbeat. He looks into the eyes of Destiny. Still smiling he walks with confidence towards her.

PAUL

(nodding)

It'll fit.

CUT TO BLACK:

CUE MUSIC: Bicycle Race by Queen.

ROLL CREDITS: A happy couple, Paul and Destiny, bike together in tandem with credits.